

## 1999-2004 Housing Element Volume I, Page 51

### “POLICIES:

1. The Planning Department shall propose zoning and permit processing changes to further reduce housing costs and average permit processing times.
2. The City shall consider appropriate organizational changes to enable development permits to be processed more expeditiously in a coordinated manner.
3. The Development Services Department shall annually monitor average processing times for discretionary development permits.”

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- “g. Revise the Companion Unit regulations to reduce barriers to development of these units. In November 2000, the Land Use and Housing Committee directed the Planning Department to propose revisions to these regulations in recognition that they could be a relatively cost effective means of creating affordable housing units if some current regulatory provisions were removed. (See Program #4)
- h. Make greater use of Master Environmental Impact Reports for major planning projects such as Redevelopment Plans and Specific Plans which will form the basis for future decision-making. Master EIR’s might also be used to facilitate the environmental review process for development in village locations. (See Program #7 below).
- i. Review Process levels for types of residential projects to determine if a reduction in decision-making level is feasible. This change would involve reviewing individual discretionary permits required in planned districts and in the Land Development Code to determine if their decision-making level might be reduced. For example, it might be possible to reduce some site development permits from a Process 4 to a Process 3 level review.
4. Companion Unit Ordinance - In accordance with State law, the City has adopted an ordinance to authorize companion units under certain conditions. To date, only a handful of companion units has received permits.

The current regulation requires a Process 3 Conditional Use Permit and prohibits the issuance of permits for companion units whenever the citywide average rental vacancy rate exceeds 5 percent and completely prohibits them in the Coastal Zone. Currently, the vacancy rate is below 5

percent and the City is accepting companion unit applications. As long as the vacancy rate remains below 5 percent, the City will continue to accept applications.

Other provisions restrict companion units to no more than 5% of the total detached primary dwelling units in any particular community planning area and require at least one of the occupants to be related to the owner or a senior citizen or a person with a disability.

These and other impediments in the ordinance have made it difficult to actually provide companion units. However, the City Council Land Use and Housing Committee have directed the Planning Department to propose changes to the Companion Unit regulations to remove these provisions in order to make the Companion Unit regulations a more usable tool for providing affordable housing. In developing the proposed changes, the Planning Department will consider the potential impacts of companion units on public facilities, parking and other community issues.”

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##### “Companion Unit Regulations which are Unnecessarily Restrictive.

The City’s Companion Unit regulations are very restrictive. These provisions include:

1. The City’s rental housing vacancy rate must be below 5 percent in order for the City to accept applications
2. Companion units are prohibited in the Coastal Zone
3. The occupant of the companion unit must be related to the owner, be a senior citizen, or be disabled.
4. Companion units are limited to no more than 5 percent of the total number of single dwelling units in a community plan area.
5. There must be a determination that public facilities and services are adequate to service the companion unit.

However, the City Council’s Land Use and Housing Committee have recognized that these provisions may be unduly restrictive and consequently has directed the Planning Department to prepare an amendment for public review which would remove these provisions in order to facilitate the use of companion units as a tool to expand housing opportunities. The Planning Department intends to draft a proposed amendment for public review and City Council consideration during the fiscal year which began July 1, 2001.”